

TOWARDS SEAMLESS TRANSFER IN UTAH HIGHER EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Transfer is robust in the Utah System of Higher Education. For instance, approximately 30 percent of students transfer between USHE institutions during the Fall semester. The percentage of transfer students increases when Spring and Summer terms are added.

The Utah Board of Regents has a strong policy to support transfer and articulation among its schools. Regents' Policy R470 sets transfer guidelines to assure that successful transfer practices support USHE students. This policy also requires annual Majors' Meetings in which faculty from 30 academic disciplines discuss how transfer can be improved. In addition, faculty discuss successful teaching strategies and competencies students need to be prepared for successful transfer to a four-year major.

In 2004, the Utah Legislature passed H.B. 320: Transfer of Credit among Higher Education Institutions, which was intended to improve course transfer by mandating common course numbers and course prefixes for General Education, pre-major and elective courses. Significant strides have been made since enactment of this bill:

- At the first Majors' Meeting after H.B. 320 was enacted, commonly numbered courses grew from 35 to more than 523 lower-division courses.

Data demonstrate that students who complete a two-year Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree at a community college, and then transfer, have a high retention and completion rate—they tend to complete a baccalaureate degree within three years of transfer. The following are longitudinal data on students who were associate degree completers in 2002-2003 and remained in the system through 2005-2006:

- 51% of associate degree completers from community colleges completed their baccalaureate programs by 2005-2006.
- 66% of associate degree completers from four-year schools with community college roles completed a baccalaureate program by 2005-2006.

ON-GOING EFFORTS TO IMPROVE TRANSFER

Students who transfer receive orientation and advising from the receiving institutions to support their success. Prior to transfer, students receive advising so that courses are chosen to further their educational goals.

The following facts tell about transfer in the USHE:

- Between 400-500 faculty and academic advisors meet annually to improve transfer.

- Institutions strongly encourage transfer students to seek academic advising before and after arriving at the receiving institution.
- In Utah, online tools are available so that students and advisors can view all courses that transfer. The Utah Transfer Guide and the Majors' Guide can be found on the USHE Website at www.utahsbr.edu.
- Utah is the only state where faculty developed and led transfer and assessment efforts. Utah is considered a national leader in system-wide transfer (National Transfer Conference, involvement with the American Association of Colleges and Universities).

A WORK IN PROGRESS

The K-16 Alliance, composed of the Governor, Commissioner of Higher Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction, legislators, regents, and school board members addresses issues of student success. Included are: course articulation between high school and college, and course articulations that allow for successful transfer within the USHE. Transfer, a work in progress, is as much a concern to the Alliance as it is to the entire USHE. The following include ongoing issues related to transfer:

- High school students need accurate advisement so that they wisely choose Advanced Placement (AP) and Concurrent Enrollment courses.
- High school counselors are critical in assuring that students understand higher education, its requirements, and how to prepare for success in college.
- Mathematics and composition faculty will continue to work on the sequencing of high school and college courses so that high school graduates are ready for college-level work.
- Courses having common numbers should be accurately reflected in college and university catalogs.
- Faculty who work on course competencies will share the information with other campus faculty.
- Faculty will continue to work on common-numbered courses while recognizing changes in academic disciplines may require implementing new courses and discontinuing others.

The transfer process is dynamic.